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My entire family was diagnosed with tick-borne illnesses in 2007. I am including tick illnesses here in addition to Lyme as they impact Lyme testing and the seriousness of the disease itself. Our symptoms included muscle cramps, stabbing pains, fatigue, twitching, light sleep, air hunger, getting winded just walking a short distance, chest pain, night sweats, swollen knees, fatigue, anxiety, OCD, memory issues, lack of focus, weakness, feeling faint, persistent headaches, migraines and many others. We all had Lyme, Babesia (a cousin of malaria) and Bartonella, and we had different strains of Babsia and were infected at different times.

Babesia combined with Lyme and Bartonella created a very serious illness for us (my son turned blue from this one day). Bartonella turns down the immune system, and allows Lyme to go wild.

Dr. Eva Sapi, at the University of New Haven in Connecticut, did a study that showed that of the ticks collected in 2008 and 2009 in four Connecticut towns 90% were positive with Lyme, and 30% with Babesia. An earlier study in CT by Eva Sapi also showed 30% of the ticks collected had Bartonella. New forms of human Babesia and Bartonella have recently been discovered, so perhaps these numbers are even higher? Many have not even heard of Babesia, but with these statistics, why aren't more people being diagnosed with it? The answer is that it is being missed on labs (as the labs done on my family show). Since Babesia can cause serious fatigue, diabetes from weight gain, and strokes and heart attacks due to clotting, this is hardly trivial.

Prior to being diagnosed with Babesia, Bartonella, and Lyme, six of us (my family and three others), had the symptoms I mentioned earlier and 28 dedicated doctors in Connecticut tried to figure out why we were ill. What they did not know was that if someone is dual or triple infected with Lyme, Babesia, and Bartonella, it could make all of their labs negative. Most of the present lab tests for these infections rely on antibodies. Being dual or triple infected can make a person too sick to fight the illnesses, and then the body does not make the antibodies, which are necessary to make the labs positive. I have labs for my family that I am willing to share that show this. As a matter of fact, I have seen doctors who looked amazed after looking at our labs. I shared our labs with doctors and the State Department of Health several years ago, and the State Department of Health had 3 people look at our labs prior to setting it aside for H1N1. A few years later, an article http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/health/21ticks.html **came out in the NY Times which included this:**

Experts fear that many undiagnosed patients may be donating blood. Currently, blood banks do not

screen for Babesia because the Food and Drug Administration has not licensed a test for this purpose. The only way to screen a patient is by using a questionnaire, which simply asks blood donors if they are infected.
Babesiosis already is the most frequently reported infection transmitted through transfusion in the United States, responsible for at least 12 deaths. In New York City, six transfusion-associated cases of babesiosis were reported in 2009. Infection by this route can be serious: One study found approximately 30 percent of people who were infected by a transfusion died.

Between 1999 and 2007, several infants in Rhode Island developed babesiosis following blood transfusions. The Rhode Island Blood Center has become the first in the country to use an experimental new test to screen blood for the parasite.

My son, Mom and I were initially negative on all tick-borne labs but tested positive for Lyme after taking a Babesia treatment. As we became strong enough to fight the Lyme, we were able to kill enough Lyme and make the antibodies, which in turn allowed us to test positive on the Western Blot (repeatedly) at Quest labs. (After just one month of treating Babesia, Lyme bands showed up for me and when I finished treating Babesia, my Lyme was IGM positive on the Western blot).

We also clearly saw our health returning after using Babesia medications and revised dosing. **After treating Lyme that finally showed up on labs, my son's eosinophil count, that had been as high as 40 for a year, came right back to his normal baseline.**

He had been to five doctors who tried to figure out why he had the very high eosinophils. (Doctors kept sending my son to their colleagues in different departments to see if they could figure out my son's eosinophilia). While these doctors were dedicated, the Babesia was missed because it did not show up on typical labs and Lyme was missed because he did not show positive on Lyme tests until clearing Babesia and making the antibodies on the Lyme test.

I had the symptoms of fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue …could being infected with Lyme, Babesia, and/or Bartonella also be a cause of fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue? Most routine labs miss Babesia and Bartonella, as well as Lyme (as mentioned above) and doctors often do not know the cause of fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue.

I had to do my own research and reading and find the doctor who could crack our illnesses and educate myself. I shared what I learned with other doctors, many of whom, impressively, were open and wanted to learn about new research in this field and treated my family accordingly.

After treating for months with traditional medicine and then Chinese herbs I progressed from having pain in every part of my body, sleeping for 12 hours and waking up like I had not gone to bed, to working two jobs, being recognized in my field, and taking care of a disabled mom (who went 5 years undiagnosed with tick-borne illness) and I know I am one of the lucky ones functioning at 99% now.

Clearly more work needs to be done to improve testing for tick-borne illnesses and with 90% of deer ticks containing Lyme and 30% containing Babesia in Connecticut, the risk is very high. Only two strains of Babesia are tested for, Microti and Duncani, but last I heard there were more than 20 strains. If 28 doctors missed the diagnoses of 6 people and the infection rate is high, then we have a serious problem, if not an epidemic.

Sincerely,

Jane Mills